

North Cape May residents face additional drug charges

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Additional charges have been filed by the Cape May County Prosecutor's Office against two North Cape May residents found sleeping in a car at a Wawa market in Wildwood.

The pair initially was charged with distribution of heroin and cocaine after police reportedly found 600 bags of heroin in their

vehicle.

Patrol officers of the Wildwood Police Department responded to a report of the duo sleeping inside a parked motor vehicle at about 10:49 p.m. Jan. 3 at the Wawa located at 418 West Rio Grande Ave.

Officers reportedly observed Cristine Pagan-Perez, 35, and Kenneth Lopez-Atiles, 29, slumped over in

their seats.

On Jan. 12, the county Prosecutor's Office Gangs, Guns and Narcotics Task Force concluded a cooperative investigation into the alleged distribution of heroin by Lopez-Atiles and Pagan after conducting search warrants at their home in the 300 block of Bayshore Road, their vehicles and storage unit. They

were assisted by Lower Township police, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the county Sheriff's Department K9 Unit.

Authorities said 2,650

more bags of suspected heroin, with a street value of about \$30,000, was seized.

Lopez-Atiles and Pagan were charged with posses-

sion of heroin, possession with intent to distribute heroin and conspiracy. Both were lodged in the Atlantic County Jail for unrelated charges.

Parking panel dissolved

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tories in Cape May," Testa said. "It's a committee that's produced and had a fair amount of success in a pretty difficult task in a city that has a serious problem in the ways of traffic and parking and transportation."

No member of the committee objects to council evaluating advisory committees, he said.

"I'm here expressing a fair amount of surprise, almost bordering on shock, that the list of committees expected to be carried through a 2023 term did not include the MPAC," Testa said.

He said for a number of reasons the committee believes its dissolution is a "mistake and ill-advised," and doesn't serve the city for a continuation of the tasks MPAC was assigned.

A misconception is MPAC deals only with parking issues, Testa said,

noting the committee was reactivated after the COVID pandemic with the task of developing recommendations for a citywide transportation system.

MPAC was about to deliver fairly comprehensive recommendations on a transportation system to council, he said.

"We think it would be wrong to chop off this committee and not allow it to function officially for the balance of 2023," Testa said.

During public comment, former deputy mayor Stacy Sheehan, who left council at the end of 2022, said she was shocked when MPAC Chairwoman Bonnie Cassells informed her the committee would not be continued into the new year.

Cassells told council she thought MPAC has done a good job of researching parking and transportation systems including those in other municipalities.

"The city does need a

transportation system, it also needs pretty significant oversight of that transportation system," she said.

A number of empty jitneys have been seen circulating through Cape May because the service was not extensively advertised and the city's visitor population turns over each week, Cassells said.

"The mayor's message focused on the fact that the city and council wanted to focus strictly on parking with the next one coming up being Lafayette Street Park," she said. "The committee had never looked at Lafayette Street Park because the parking that was slated for that park was for the people utilizing recreation in that park."

She said if parking at Lafayette Street Park were opened to the general public, no parking spaces would be available to users of the park.

"I would respectfully request that you allow us to finish the job that we were assigned," Cassells said.

After the meeting, Mullock said council wasn't convinced it was a good idea to take away all of the parking on Jackson Street and did not want that to be the sole focus of MPAC. He said it was important to ensure MPAC and the city would work toward the same goals.

Cassells told the Star and Wave that according to the mayor, City Council did not feel there was a need to look at parking at the moment because any solutions would be far in the future.

She said MPAC focused on Jackson Street because one of the proposed jitney routes would use the street, which is often a bottleneck.

MPAC members met with the mayor two weeks ago to explain they were focused on transportation not just parking, Cassells said.



Photo by Tim Hawk for NJ.com

A Proposal to Protect Our Whales and Wildlife

The Cape May Point Science Center recommends the study to establish a Scientific Whale Protection Program. The program would integrate the currently established AIS system which tracks Marine Vessels with a newly created real time tracking system of whales.

The endangered Right Whales and Humpback Whales travel relatively close to the surface. This vulnerability also facilitates the whales to be tracked with satellite tracking. Scientists could study ship and whale collisions to study whale death patterns.

The system would operate in real time and ships could be sent warning messages where whales are in their vicinity. The AIS ship tracking system is already established for ships 65 ft and over. Many marine vessels in the 35-60 ft length also voluntarily are in the AIS system.

The Cape May Point Science Center is looking forward to working with other non-profit environmental groups concerned with protecting the whales. It is our overall community's responsibility to protect these whales that bless our shores.



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